

MSF welcomes effort to improve the functioning of WHO and considers the following to be its core functions:

1. Acting “as the directing and coordinating authority on international health work” and its governance, providing leadership on matters critical to health and health security;
2. Setting norms and standards, and articulating policy options in a manner that is evidence-based and independent of conflicts of interest;
3. Supporting countries through catalysing change, providing technical support; and holding them to account on the implementation of guidelines, norms and standards, and ensuring that health is protected in trade and other agreements;
4. Stimulating priority medical research and ensuring broad access to the fruits of research.

We welcome the proposal to review stakeholder relations, but note there are no timelines for delivery. We support the immediate review of the accreditation process and for measures to distinguish between NGOs and others.

However, we are concerned that even before the main programme of reform has been agreed, fundamental changes to core departments are afoot. These changes are potentially irreversible, with the loss of skilled and experienced staff and WHO leadership.

This situation is exemplified by the situation of the Essential Medicines Department, normally a WHO flagship. Although the previous director’s retirement in May 2011 was known in advance, the position was only opened months later and interviews have not started.

Regular and unspecified contributions to EMP have decreased to under 15% with an increasing dependence on specified funds - already at 70% in 2008-2009 - and on philanthropy. As a result many areas of work have languished, including technical support to countries. The work of several expert committees is not secured.

We call on the Member States to ensure that the core areas of normative work are strengthened, not weakened and their independence protected through the process of reform. Adequate, regular budget support must be secured for the aforementioned core functions.